The Conservation of Brick Buildings. By T. G. Bidwell, RIBA, AA Diploma.

1977. Brick Development Association. £1·50.

The main headings covered in this useful 28-page booklet are: survey stage; structural failures in brickwork and recommended treatments; failure of bricks; water penetration of brickwork; fungus and other growths; alterations to old brickwork; and surface appearance. Together with the list of references, the text, with its emphasis on restoring old brickwork to a further span of life, will be valuable to all involved in repair, maintenance, improvement and conservation of brick buildings.

M. C.

CORRESPONDENCE

From Mr W. F. Forrest, Estates Manager, Hammersmith L.B.C.

Rent Arrears

Sir,

May I be allowed to concur almost entirely with Mr Parkinson's comments on rent arrears statistics (*Housing Review*, August 1977).

Having said that, I would like to take up the larger issue of the reasons for producing such statistics. Directors of finance and other finance oriented observers are quite rightly concerned with accurate accounting and non-distortion of hard monetary facts, but we in this department try to use the statistics, not as a continuing horror story to chill the blood of the local press, council members, ratepayers and researchers, but as an indication of the success or failure of our attempts to reduce rent arrears. In this we have found it useful to show the amount of debt which is being reduced, albeit by only 50p a week, by direct payments by the Department of Health and Social Security. This is not merely a white-washing exercise which would enable us to show a lower arrears figure if the Director of Finance allowed it, which he does not, but gives some indication of what proportion of the debt the hard pressed management assistants can virtually forget about.

We are trying hard, incidentally, to emulate Lambeth's laudable example of 2,500 direct payments from the Department of Health and Social Security.

Yours faithfully,

W. F. Forrest,

Estates Manager

Hammersmith Housing Centre, 77 Glenthorne Road, London, W6 0LJ.

BRANCH NEWS

North West Region inaugural meeting

The inaugural meeting of the North West Region of the HCT held in Liverpool on 1st October attracted 50 people with a variety of interests in housing. Mr. C. Darley, Director of Housing for the Wirral was in the chair, the theme "Urban Renewal." Colin Watts of the Liverpool Inner Area Study team, described the appalling economic problems of a city with a declining and altered economic base, lack of employment, and 20,000 teenagers with little chance of a job leading to disaffection and increasing crime. He doubted the value of some of the proposals of the White Paper on the Inner City and the perspective of the Manpower Services Commission. There can be little hope for renewal without a productive economic and social future for Merseyside in the context of the North West region.

Richard Hargreaves, Chief Planning Officer for Rochdale, gave a graphic description of the development of the industrial GIA in that city. He thought too much of our time went on problem identification and too little on action. In an area where 80 per cent of industry is largely out of date in a poor environment, apathy is fatal. The political will to improve the urban condition based upon and fuelled by community involvement at all levels is the key factor for change. To establish confidence is vital—without it, private industry will not move to the inner city.

B. G.

Branch Secretary: B. L. Gosschalk, School of Architecture, Manchester University, Manchester M13 9PL.

Proposal for a Scottish Branch

Opinion was canvassed at the Housing Centre Study Day and Study Visit in Glasgow on 9th/10th November, about the possible response to the formation of a Scottish Branch of the Centre. Members and authorities in Scotland have been asked to let Chandos Place know of their interest and any reader who is interested and would like to be kept informed should do likewise.

Are you a regular reader of the *Housing Review*? If not, why not become a *Housing Centre member* and receive your own copy? For details of membership subscriptions covering other activities also and offering an opportunity to contribute to housing opinion through a non-partisan body, please write to:

Housing Centre Trust, 62, Chandos Place, London WC2N 4HG.

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